



Sustainable Communities Boot Camp

A Resource Guide for Local Leaders



Chicago Region's GO TO 2040 Plan

In a metropolitan region with more units of local government than any other in the U.S. and a reputation for independence, strong local control, and fierce local politics, Chicago area officials and institutions are proving that cooperation across jurisdictions and sectors is not only possible, but can lead to new resources and opportunities to strengthen communities and expand economic opportunity for all. A new comprehensive regional plan, GO TO 2040, and several subregional collaboratives are together positioning the Chicago metro region to more effectively address complex community challenges. Strong partnerships among government, business, and foundation and nonprofit leaders have been key to bringing the region together around a plan that provides a framework to guide development and investment priorities, measure progress and deliver results.



Image credit: Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce

THE PLAN

Goals. GO TO 2040, Chicago's new comprehensive regional plan, links transportation, land use, housing, economic growth, the natural environment, and human and community development with the overarching goals of improving livability and creating sustainable prosperity. The plan addresses the region's thorniest issues—sprawl, inequitable distribution of affordable housing, and inadequate access to transit—which together limit access to opportunities, especially for disadvantaged residents.

The plan was developed over a three-year period by the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP), the MPO responsible for transportation and land use planning across the seven counties of northeastern Illinois. CMAP executive director Randy Blankenhorn says GO TO 2040 is a departure from the past in several ways, and that it recognizes the interdependence of regional prosperity and livable communities. "We can't have one without the other." And it's not a "dreamer's plan" but is grounded in fiscal reality and focused on 12 priority issues that will "make what we already have work better."

The four themes of the plan—Livable Communities, Human Capital, Efficient Governance and Regional Mobility—call for better training for the region's workforce, economic innovation that builds on the region's assets, strategic investments in aging transportation infrastructure, and more government efficiency and accountability. While Blankenhorn emphasized that this plan is achievable because we're not "thinking beyond our grasp," it is still meant to inspire and build on the legacy of Daniel Burnham, author of Chicago's original comprehensive plan 100 years ago, by thinking big and thinking boldly.

Getting started. The actual GO TO 2040 plan was three years in the making and the result of extensive background research, partnerships, public input, and deliberation. However, Chicago Mayor Richard Daley laid the groundwork for the visionary plan in 1997 when he convened a meeting with dozens of suburban mayors to promote regional collaboration as a pathway to addressing challenges and competing in the global economy. The outgrowth of the historic meeting was a new Metropolitan Mayors Caucus (MMC), which now convenes 273 city and suburban mayors. Around this time a new regional business organization—Chicago Metropolis 2020—emerged and the Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC)—a policy organization founded in 1934—recommitted itself to metro-scale solutions. One of the early acts of MMC was to join with Metropolis 2020 in a public-private effort to push for a rewrite of state laws to combine two different planning entities and create CMAP, a single agency responsible for planning and land use for Chicago and the surrounding counties. After years of rapid but uncoordinated growth, CMAP provided the leadership for Chicago's government, business, and civic leaders to pursue a more strategic, coordinated approach.



Public engagement. GO TO 2040 was developed through an inclusive scenario-based process that reflects the input of more than 35,000 residents. After launching the process with a visioning event at the Illinois Institute of Technology, CMAP and its partners held dozens of meetings and workshops and employed state-of-the-art technology to facilitate a transparent, far reaching process. To make sure they heard from underrepresented populations, CMAP provided grants to 10 community based organizations to organize

meetings to gather input from low-income, minority, and disabled residents. Interactive kiosks placed in highly visited locations, like libraries, museums, Millennium Park and Sears Tower gave the public a chance to try their hand at planning. Using a software tool called MetroQuest, visitors could answer questions about their transportation and land use preferences and then see the projected impact of their choices on issues such as taxes, commute times, and air quality.

Business engagement. Working in partnership with MPC, Metropolis 2020 and the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce CMAP met with literally hundreds of businesses, large and small, to discuss the economic future of the region. Early in the process, CMAP partnered with the Illinois and Chicagoland Chambers of Commerce and the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago to hold a summit on how the business community saw CMAP and GO TO 2040 adding value to the economic activity

and planning for the region. To guide them on the Plan's development, CMAP created an Economic Community Development Committee and an Industrial Advisory Committee that met quarterly to discuss ongoing economic development issues. The main issues from the business sector revolved around education and workforce; the importance of infrastructure, particularly transportation; the efficiency and efficacy of government; and the need to support innovation and research.

Strategies for equitable outcomes and prosperity for all. GO TO 2040 recognizes the need to achieve broad regional prosperity and provide equitable opportunities, stating: "Disparities in educational attainment, health, and other measures—often based on income levels, race, or ethnicity—put the entire region's economy at risk." The Chicago Community Trust (CCT), the community foundation for the Chicago region, played a significant role in bringing equity issues forward in the planning process. Strategies included in the plan to achieve equitable outcomes included reducing the combined cost of housing and transportation, improving education, and investing in specialized workforce development programs that would better match skills with future employer needs. The plan targets health disparities by increasing the availability of healthy local food especially in the city's "food deserts" and creating walkable neighborhoods with access to parks and open space.

Indicators. CCT and CMAP are also working together to track more than 200 data points in a publicly accessible, interactive web-based platform called MetroPulse. Sample indicators by outcome include unemployment and poverty rates (economy), greenhouse gas emissions (environment), housing cost burden (housing), infant mortality (health), violent crimes (safety), land considered underutilized (land use), and previous plan implementation (coordinated planning).

Improving access to public information for effective and transparent decisionmaking is one of the top goals of GO TO 2040. CMAP and CCT developed MetroPulse as a tool that policymakers, community leaders, the media, and public can use to inform their work. CMAP created and will maintain a data warehouse of more than 1000 tables drawn from dozens of sources. MetroPulse processes the data to generate interactive charts and maps for users. CCT helped to identify important indicators and make sure the site was user friendly and will continue to develop new portals based on user interest. The ultimate goal is to improve quality of life through better public decisionmaking.

Where it is today. The plan was unanimously adopted by CMAP on October 13, 2010. The next day, Chicago got more good news in the form of a \$4.25 million HUD Sustainable Communities Regional Planning grant that will fund a local technical assistance program to build community capacity to implement the plan. Local governments and community organizations will be able to apply to CMAP for support for innovative, replicable activities such as assessment of future housing demand and updates of local zoning ordinances and codes to support transit-oriented development (TOD).

CMAP and its partners, while proud of having produced a plan with broad buy-in and support, also recognize the challenges ahead. Fiscal realities at the local, state, and federal levels mean prioritizing elements of the plan in order to keep moving forward. Municipalities will need to take ownership. We need to "make it more real for mayors," says Dave Bennett, executive director of the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus. CMAP's Randy Blankenhorn says increasing the efficiency of government and service delivery will be the hardest part. "We have a 1960s tax structure in a 21st century economy," and a new fair and equitable structure is needed to better serve business,



¹For more, see http://MetroPulsechicago.org.

government and residents. He also emphasized the importance of increasing outreach efforts to the private sector to ensure that the business community is involved in leading the way forward. Political turnover will also have an impact. How well Chicago's next mayor works with the incoming governor will make a significant difference for securing the resources for the plan. CMAP, CCT, MMC, and their partners are ready to educate and work with newly elected officials and the broader community to generate the support and resources for successful implementation.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

There is enthusiastic support for the plan and a sense of momentum from the cooperation that happened behind the scenes. "The whole thing was a massive exercise in collaboration," said Ngoan Le, VP of the Chicago Community Trust, and the main lesson is that *investing in collaboration has big benefits*. A key detail in the way that these efforts came about in Chicago is that region-wide collaborative network did not form all at once. Instead, several smaller-scale partnerships occurred along the way, which then came together to collaborate on bigger scale issues to benefit the region. Without any one of these sub-clusters, explained MarySue Barrett of the Metropolitan Planning Council, the collaborations that are now yielding fruit would not have been possible. Now, broad buy-in across sectors and jurisdictions is changing how Chicago does business.

Inter-jurisdictional collaboration yields new resources to address community and regional challenges. Randy Blankenhorn acknowledges the challenges of collaboration in a city with Chicago's rough and tumble politics and says to other regions: "If we can do this here, it can be done anywhere." The formation of the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus was a key stepping stone because it provided a forum for municipalities to build alliances and develop friendly and trusting relationships with one another. Nine subregional municipal associations existed previously, but MMC provided a chance for Mayors to work together for the first time on a regional scale. An initial three year seed grant from the MacArthur Foundation provided the resources to hire staff and bring the Caucus into existence. There are only three or four other organizations like MMC in the U.S. today. Dave Bennett and his staff assert it didn't happen overnight—"It has taken years to get here"—and they needed the willingness on everyone's part to put politics and self interest aside. Eventually MMC was able to take on hot button issues like water resources, which would not have been possible without the mayors' existing comfort level with each other. Today MMC is spawning even greater collaboration at the subregional level with initiatives focusing on clean air, education funding reform, housing affordability, and immigration and diversity issues, among others.

Inter-jurisdictional collaboration has led to several important 'wins' for Chicagoans. CMAP itself emerged out of this thinking that "we've got to work together," said Randy Blankenhorn. And as CMAP and its partners celebrated the award of a HUD regional planning grant, a group of south suburban mayors had a parallel success when it won a \$2.4 million HUD Sustainable Communities Challenge Grant to help spur development along rail and transit corridors (see article on next page). A recent energy efficiency retrofit grant to CMAP from the Department of Energy was the first time a grant was awarded for a regional effort involving Chicago and the suburbs. Ngoan Le of CCT, which played an instrumental role in commissioning a strategy paper that led to the successful DOE application, thinks the south suburban effort and the DOE collaboration are important precedents and that between the HUD and DOE grants, CMAP is now positioned to be not just a planning but an implementation agency.

CMAP, MMC, CCT, and others worked hard to overcome typical barriers to collaboration. Collaboration requires resources and a continuous effort to get buy-in and remind people to leave politics at door. MMC advises regions to start with low-hanging fruit to build trust; their experience was that inter-jurisdictional efforts can take off from there.

COLLABORATION AMONG CHICAGO'S SOUTHERN SUBURBS LEADS TO NEW OPPORTUNITIES

Reeling from the rapidly spreading foreclosure crisis, a group of racially and ethnically diverse suburbs south of Chicago known collectively as Southland joined together around a sustainable redevelopment strategy. Though they came together just 18 months ago, the Chicago Southland Housing and Community Development Collaborative (CSHCDC or "The Collaborative"), along with other regional partners, is beginning to reverse years of disinvestment and economic decline.

Chicago's south suburbs were built around the railways that helped make Chicago the economic and transportation center of the Midwest. But years of sprawling regional growth and disinvestment left Southland and its residents—more than a third of whom are African-American—behind, saddled with deteriorating infrastructure, acres of brownfields and limited economic opportunities within close proximity.

Today however, the South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association (SSMMA) and the Collaborative are coming together to change the landscape. These leaders knew, for instance, that although the first round of HUD's Neighborhood Stabilization Program gave no preference for regional applications, it was important that communities not compete against each other for these resources. Therefore, 20 towns came together to submit one application, securing approximately \$9 million for 11 towns. Knowing this money would make a minimal impact, towns worked with their neighbors to ensure that funds were strategically targeted to maximize results. To revitalize the housing market in the southern suburbs, the creation of jobs must occur. Therefore the SSMMA and CSHCDC have joined with the Chicago Southland



The south suburbs are redeveloping around existing rail infrastructure.

Image credit: Chicago Southland's Green Time Zone

Economic Development Corporation (CSEDC) to aggressively pursue a multi-faceted strategy for sustainable development that includes Transit-Oriented Development (especially through the work of CSHCDC), Cargo-Oriented Development, and green manufacturing, with the emphasis on strong potential for job creation. *The Green Time Zone* is probably the most comprehensive statement of this strategy.

The Collaborative is attracting attention—and resources—from other state and national programs, including the HUD Sustainable Communities Challenge Grant, EPA's Smart Growth Implementation Assistance Program and Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant funds through the Illinois Dept. of Commerce and Economic Opportunity. Local foundations are also supporting the Collaborative with funding for a housing director and a part-time planning staff person. The Metropolitan Planning Council and the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus are also being funded to provide technical assistance.

SSMMA, a thirty-five year old, 42 member community Council of Government, collaborates to work across issues and sectors. By working through the SSMMA, the Green Time Zone will connect the dots—on workforce, housing, transit-oriented development, energy efficiency, renewable energy, green manufacturing and intermodal freight—to reinvent the sub-region for green, inclusive, economic prosperity.

Sources: http://www.cnt.org/news/2010/10/20/chicago-south-suburbs-awarded-2-3-million-to-use-rail-infrastructure-to-revitalize-region; http://www.cnt.org/repository/GTZ.pdf; http://sites.google.com/site/cshcdc

Tackle challenging issues by bringing in partners with complementary roles and expertise. While the successful GO TO 2040 planning effort suggests a united region, the Chicago Community Trust and others are quick to point out that Chicago still has persistent poverty and racial divides. CCT was

particularly effective in getting equity and diversity issues addressed by making grants to several nonprofit organizations, producing a series of strategy papers focused on human relations, food policy, workforce development, and other topics that aren't typically addressed in comprehensive land use plans. Grantees included nontraditional planning partners like early childhood education organizations, the Illinois Arts Alliance, Chicago Jobs Council, Chicago Food Policy Council, and the Lawyer's Committee on Civil Rights Under Law. CCT was clear about grantee responsibilities, providing each with a common reporting template and requiring them to convene advisory committees that included grassroots organizations and experts representing both city and suburbs.

As CCT's Ngoan Le explains, the Chicago region has a growing minority population and increased poverty rates (20% in Chicago and over 10% in the region); helping to reduce poverty rates and closing the education attainment gap for minority students must be taken into account for the region to succeed. But CCT and CMAP both acknowledge that issues of race and poverty are difficult to address in a comprehensive planning process. Partly because topics like segregation, hunger and affordable housing can be controversial, Le says there was a healthy debate with CMAP about how directly the final plan would address equity issues. She credits CMAP for letting CCT take the lead on these issues in a way that let each partner play to its strengths. By delegating to CCT and its nonprofit partners, CMAP actually ensured that issues of equity and inclusion were addressed in a way that was thorough and substantive.

CMAP planners weren't experts in race, diversity, and equity issues. CCT on the other hand, with its deep community roots, was uniquely positioned to look at the range of needs facing the region's socially and economically diverse population. CMAP ultimately posted the full strategy papers produced by CCT grantees on their website with the final plan. In this way, Le thinks that CMAP found a way to speak to two audiences: the business and political leaders who were comfortable with the more market driven approach of the actual plan, and the advocates and nonprofits who want to "push the envelope."

CCT believes that community foundations are valuable planning partners. Along with the strategy papers, CCT was also instrumental in developing the indicators to track progress. Ngoan Le said they were inspired by the Boston Foundation and other community foundations that have harnessed the power of data to drive community change. CCT had their grantee partners recommend important benchmarks to measure improvement in each issue area, and, as part of their collaboration on MetroPulse, negotiated with CMAP to select those that would ultimately be the most useful.

CCT staff said that the process of collaborating with CMAP on GO TO 2040 was itself transformational for both organizations. CCT gained a better understanding of planning and has become a much more proactive organization in the last three years. CMAP has gained a deeper awareness of the region's changing demographics, which is important as it takes on the roles and responsibilities of a funder through the competitive Local Technical Assistance process it is administering as well as grants to community organizations to ensure an inclusive planning process.

Leadership and a vision for the future brings business on board. Chicago had numerous plans and initiatives to promote more sustainable communities. According to Jerry Roper, CEO of the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce, that was part of the problem: too many organizations involved and too many "one-off "initiatives resulting in many plans and "fiefdoms"—all requiring revenue. The state government was in disarray, adding to the confusion. The business community was frustrated by the plans' lack of interconnectedness and was insistent about the need for something

more strategic and cohesive to show that the region was thinking ahead and looking at how to retain and grow companies. Once CMAP was created, the Chamber threw its support behind the agency to spearhead development of a single plan. Roper said CMAP's state and federal mandate gave the agency important legitimacy with political and business leaders. The Chamber already had committees and a Chamber of Commerce Foundation in place, so it could easily tap existing programs and structures to engage its members.

The involvement of the business community shaped the plan in important ways. After their initial outreach meetings CMAP realized that they needed to be clearer about the importance of the plan on guiding the economic prosperity of the region. That helped them to focus around the two interrelated themes of regional economic prosperity and strong communities and to better articulate that having one required the other. This new focus drove the rest of the process and CMAP's thinking about how policies and investments related to job creation, workforce development, tax policy and infrastructure investments could support the two main themes of the plan. "The business community really helped us get our arms around what matters both now and in the future," said Randy Blankenhorn. The business community clearly saw they had a role to play but also wanted to know how and if the plan was going to result in the necessary changes for its recommendations to be implemented. This led CMAP to realize the importance of "the ask," and they developed context sections in the plan outlining roles for everyone from business to government to nonprofits to individuals.

Cultivating leadership. Leadership is clearly important in pulling together a region like metropolitan Chicago. The City of Chicago was fortunate to have a forceful and famous mayor, and Roper concedes that Mayor Daley's star power was influential with foreign leaders and suburban mayors alike. But for cities that don't have a celebrity mayor, a business or civic leader can play an important role. (If the nonprofit and business organizations don't exist to pull other stakeholders to the table, Randy Blankenhorn's advice is to create them.)

Jerry Roper says cities and regions shouldn't wait for the federal government to provide funding, ideas or incentives. But they should engage the business community—who "love to be asked"—about how to create sustainable regional economies. Roper emphasizes that business and civic organizations have traditionally played a strong role in urban planning and development, citing the fact that Daniel Burnham was hired by the Commercial Club to write the original plan for Chicago (which was also the first comprehensive urban growth plan in the U.S.). Businesses help build cities, and Roper believes the Carnegies and Mellons of today can play an important role.

Roberto Requejo, a CCT program officer, says that it's important to invest in developing more leadership at the city, regional and state levels. Chicago has pockets of leaders with this mindset but more work is needed to create a cohort of public sector practitioners and elected officials that understand smart growth and sustainable communities.

There is also a need to change the federal mindset. While the partnership between HUD, EPA and DOT is promising, GO TO 2040 calls for policy, legislative and regulatory changes that focus more on cities and regions. Randy Blankenhorn says the federal government needs to understand that collaboration is a better way and get policies and resources aligned accordingly.

Invest in engaging and educating community. CMAP and its partners stress the importance of investing early in community outreach and education, saying a plan has to belong to the region if implementation is going to be successful. CMAP and CCT emphasize that it takes time and money

to reach people, but the investment is worthwhile because of the buy-in it creates.

Leverage opportunities for public engagement. CMAP's Randy Blankenhorn said he thinks Chicago had an advantage because of its history. Residents have an appreciation for architecture, design and public space, so it wasn't hard to get people engaged in the regional vision conversation. The 2040 planning process also happened to coincide with a yearlong celebration of the 100-year anniversary of Daniel Burnham's legendary "The Plan of Chicago." The commemoration provided opportunities to engage residents at public events to talk about the next plan and what they thought was important for the region.

Reaching out to nontraditional partners can pay off. CMAP reached out in ways that had not been done before, and nonprofits—which hadn't been part of previous planning processes—played a major role by contributing many ideas that went into the final plan. CCT's Ngoan Le notes that she was particularly impressed with the enthusiastic and well organized participation of the arts and culture community, which had never before been involved in regional planning.

Recognize and build off assets. Jerry Roper encourages other regions to identify and build off the assets they already have. GO TO 2040 leverages Chicago's strengths: its geographic location as "the capital of the Midwest," great transportation, top notch universities, and a livable city that attracts young professionals. The region also made a strategic decision to embrace the diversity represented by the sheer number of municipalities in the metro area as a strength rather than a weakness.

Recognizing its strengths helped the city transform its former industrial economy into a modern day global center for business, finance and innovation. GO TO 2040's commitment to innovation has the business community particularly excited. Jerry Roper explained that half a dozen years ago, inspired by the work of John Kao, author of "Innovation Nation," the Chamber committed to pursuing innovation as an economic engine for the region. Through its Innovate Now initiative, the Chamber forged partnerships with academia and the public and nonprofit sectors to support entrepreneurs and help existing firms explore new ideas, products, and technologies. Chicago is now home to innovation centers for Microsoft, Google, Motorola and Wrigley. Attracting venture capital and entrepreneurs to start and grow new businesses and expand the innovation economy is a central tenet of Chicago's plan for building a resilient regional economy.

Thanks to Randy Blankenhorn, Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning; Jerry Roper, Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce; David Bennett, Allison Milld, Kate Agasie and Eve Pytel, Metropolitan Mayors Caucus; Ngoan Le and Roberto Requejo, Chicago Community Trust; MarySue Barrett, Metropolitan Planning Council.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, http://www.cmap.illinois.gov.

See in particular the GO TO 2040 plan (http://www.cmap.illinois.gov/2040) and Strategy Papers (http://www.cmap.illinois.gov/go-to-2040-strategy-papers)

MetroPulse, http://www.metropulsechicago.org

MMC, http://www.mayorscaucus.org

